





# HARRISBURG CONFERENCE,

SEPTEMBER. 1788.

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Published in the Harrisburg DAILY

PATRIOT in its issues from Nov.

10 to November 18, 1879.



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On the first page of the first volume of the *Writings of Albert Gallatin*, edited by Henry Adams, will be found "Draft of the report of the Harrisburg Conference, September 3, 1788."

Gallatin does not appear to have left any information respecting this assemblage, except this endorsement upon a series of resolutions—which will be given further on—prepared before he came to the conference. Happily allusions to it are to be found elsewhere, or we should not know much of it, or of the excitement which succeeded it. Of that it will be necessary to say something, preliminary to a notice of its proceedings.

The editor of the "Writings" does not state that G. left an account of what took place in conference. Thus any one who has his curiosity aroused respecting it, may expect tedious research to ascertain its history. I hope to relate the story without impairing its accuracy. But a volume would not exhaust the interest of the political history of the period embraced in the two years covered by the discussions respecting the federal constitution. That instrument was in great peril. Only the preponderating influence of Washington saved it from rejection by the states.

No account of, or allusion to this conference by any of its members, is to be found. Dallas, Graydon, Reed, Findley, Madison and even Gallatin pass it by Brackenridge who notices, either in prose or verse, most of the transactions of his time, does not describe it. It has escaped the researches or criticisms of modern historians. Yet it had a permanent influence on party organization in this state. Gallatin, Smilie, Whitehall, McClanahan, Gardner, Pettit, Hanna, all figure among its members. They were great letter writers, held high station in state and nation, were leading men in in most of the relations of life, but not one of them has left a line that I can discover respecting its proceedings, or the influence it exercised on the politics of Pennsylvania.

Upon the supposition therefore, that a brief summary of the incidents out of



which it took form will not prove entirely without interest, I shall attempt a connected review of the cause which led to its meeting; describe the men who composed it; offer some local notes; together with such description of the agitations of the period, as I have had leisure to condense.

Its assembling created a profound sensation in Pennsylvania ninety one years ago.

The tempestuous scenes which preceded and led to it are very curious. Perhaps too great a portion of this paper is occupied in detailing them. If so a mistake has been made that the reader can rectify to please himself. The authorities and papers examined have been severely condensed, but not to such an extent as to pervert them.

Before Pennsylvania held a convention to ratify the federal constitution, the friends of several proposed amendments asked for time to discuss the great questions involved. The "constitutionalists" in most peremptory language refused to listen to this. Such men as Mifflin, McKean, Franklin, Wilson, the Clymers, spoke and wrote against delay. The "convention of states" had adopted the constitution September 17, 1787. This event opened the scene about to be described.

As this convention held its sittings in Philadelphia, as well as the assembly of the states, communication between them was easy. Indeed the intimacy between them was very close. Franklin, the president of the state; McKean, the chief justice, and Mifflin, the speaker of the assembly, were delegates to the former body. Thus, upon the next day, September 18, the delegation, headed by Franklin, appeared at the bar of the assembly laying upon its table a letter from Charles Thompson, enclosing a copy of the constitution. Franklin then addressed our assembly, urging a speedy adoption of the constitution.

Ten days elapsed, occupied in "electioneering"—as Clark, of Dauphin, honestly called it—to obtain a unanimous vote in its favor. This failing, on the 28th, George Clymer, a member from Philadelphia, called the attention of the house to the importance of agreeing to the request of the state delegation "for a convention," submitting resolutions providing for the election of such a body. The opposition, led by very able men, immediately





took form. Robert Whitehill, of Cumberland, tersely stated the cause of it, remarking, "the house, sir, ought to have time to consider on this subject before they determine," and moved "to postpone until afternoon, as the session is drawing near to a close." It may be properly stated here that the assembly had resolved to adjourn sine die next day.

After some argument, a vote was taken upon the simple question of calling "a convention," (not to fix a time for it, or for an election, or for any other purpose (was the one upon which the parties measured their strength. The assembly consisted of 64 members, including the speaker. It required two-thirds to form a quorum including that officer. Keeping this in mind, it will be seen how important the vote was deemed to be. The yeas 43, nays 20, the speaker not voting. The house adjourned "in some heat."

Upon assembling in the afternoon of the same day there were but 43 members not a quorum.

On the journal of 1787, appears a stately official account of what then occurred; very brief notice in the newspapers of the day; fortunately the scene in its richness is preserved in "Lloyd's Debates." We quote such portions of it as will show how our forefathers furnished a precedent which has so often been followed by their successors.

Mr. Wynkoop, of Bucks—"We have under consideration business of the highest importance;" he "suspected" (what was patent to himself and his auditors), that the "dissenting members of the morning had purposely absented themselves," and moved that "the sergeant-at-arms, with a clerk, be sent after them."

After a while these officers returned, when the following occurred.

"Speaker (Mifflin)—Well, S. of A., have you seen the absent members?"

S. of A.—Yes sir. I saw R. Whitehill, Kennedy, Mitchell, Piper, Powel, Dale, Findley, Bar, Wright, M'Dowell, Flenniken, Allison, Gilchrist, M'Calmont, Robert Clark, Antis and Miley.

Sp.—What did you say to them?"

To which S. of A. replied that he told them he was "sent for them;" they told him that "they could not attend this after-



noon, as they had not made up their minds."

D. Clymer, of Berks—How is that?

Sp.—Who told you this?

S. of A.—Mr. Whitehill told me the first. Ro. Clark said 'they must go electioneering now.'

The refractory members had assembled at Major Boyd's, on Sixth street, to whose house a very disorderly crowd had accompanied the officers of the assembly, and some damage was done Boyd's premises, for which the state afterward paid.

D. Clymer—"What took place and who was there?"

The S. of A. replied that McLena of council was present, and asked "who sent me. Smilie was also present; but no private citizens—all were men in public office."

D. Clymer—"Pray, what did the honorable Mr. Smilie say?"

S. of A.—"Nothing."

D. Clymer—"Could every person in the room hear McLena's question, and did they determine not to come?"

S. of A.—"As I understood it, nearly."

Wynkoop and Lowrey, of Lancaster, wished to know what was to be done?

Before this was determined the clerk appeared and was examined at the bar. His relation was:

'I went, sir, in pursuance of your order, with the sergeant at-arms, in search of the absent members. First, sir, I went to Major Boyd's, and there saw Mr. Miley and Mr. McCalmont. I informed them that the speaker and members present had sent me for them, and showed them the resolutions of congress. They told me, in answer, that they would not attend. Before I got from that door I saw Col. Piper and some other member, who I do not recollect, at a great distance. I went after them to the corner of Arch and Sixth streets. I saw Mr. Bar and Mr. Findley, Col. Piper and some other member going toward Market street. Mr. Findley looked around and saw me, as I supposed, for he mended his pace. I followed Mr. Piper and Mr. Bar, who kept on to Market street, and soon turned the corner. Before I got there I lost sight of Mr. Findley, who, I supposed, had got into some House. I went forward after Piper



and Bar, and came up with them, and told them of the unanimous resolution of congress, but they answered me in the same manner, that they would not attend. From them I went to Mr. Whitehill's lodgings, and saw a woman that I supposed to be the maid of the house; she informed me that Mr. Whitehill was up stairs; she went up and staid some time, when she returned and told me he was not at home. I saw also Mr Clark and Mr. McDowell in the street, and Mr. McDowell told me he would consider of the matter, and he would do what he thought just. I saw Mr. Mitchell at Mr. Whitehill's lodgings, and he said he would not attend. Mr. Dale and Mr. Antis I found at their lodgings, and Mr Dale told me he would not attend. Mr. Antis said this resolution of congress had not come officially, and therefore he would not attend."

D Clymer asked if Mr. McCalmont had offered any excuse when he was desired to attend?

Clerk—"No; he said he had heard of the resolution of congress, but he would not attend."

Without a quorum, nothing could be done, and the assembly at once adjourned until next day.

September 29, last day of the session, no quorum. In a short time, Mil-y, of Dauphin, and M'Calmont, of Franklin, were forcibly brought into the room.

Before this it was discovered that Gen. Robert Brown, of Northampton, had left the hall and was not to be found.

The speaker, counting himself, then announced a quorum. Immediately rose M'Calmont, of Franklin, exclaiming that he had been "forcibly brought into the house" and praying to be "dismissed." The house refused. Then M'Calmont agreed to abide by the rules. It was found that to break a quorum would cost "5 shillings, for the benefit of the Pennsylvania hospital," whereupon he put his hand in his pocket and said "here is your 5 shillings; so let me go."

This proposition was declined by the speaker, for the reason that the rule made "no provision for a custodian of the fine!" This explanation was given "amid much



laughter;" and the two members thus forcibly captured "compelled to form a quorum." After further debate, M'Calmont rose and "made toward the door," but was stopped by the "crowd on the floor and in the gallery." A hand to hand tussle then took place and M'Calmont "was again seated." He then asked for leave of absence "for a particular personal service." This was also refused. During all these scenes Miley kept his seat, silent and dignified, although as positive against the course of the assembly as the turbulent Scotch Irish member from Franklin.

M'Calmont his life long asserted that at the time he rose to leave the house, Mifflin, Clymer and others, fellow members, "nearly tore the coat off his back" in carrying him "along the hall to his seat, from which they would not let him get up." He always opposed Mifflin afterwards. As he was a man of energy and influence he was a troublesome and respected adversary.

*M'Calmont*—A popular and enterprising gentleman; a great part of his life in public employment; "a major in Culbertson's regiment and also in Smith's rangers;" a native of Franklin county, born in 1739; a member of assembly from 1780 to 1789; then judge until his death in 1809.

*Miley*—A native of Dauphin, now Lebanon county; resident of Bethel township; representative in the assembly, under the old and again under the constitution of 1790. He died near Stumpstown, possessed of a fair estate in October, 1802.

Before the assembly adjourned it placed in the hand of M'Calmont orders for "the pay and mileage due the absentees." Showing that he was considered a man of integrity by his colleagues, even if he was refractory under what in these days would be called harsh treatment.





Reference has been made to the tumult at Boyd's. The circumstances respecting it are stated in the deposition of Hon. John Beard, a member of the executive council from Westmoreland county, "taken before Plunket Fleeson, esq., Nov. 9, 1787."

Mr. Beard being duly sworn on the Holy Gospel, doth depose, testify and say, that he, this deponent, doth lodge with Alexander Boyd, and that being in bed at the dwelling of the said Alexander, in Sixth street from the Delaware river, in the city of Philadelphia, on Tuesday night last, the 6th inst. and being fallen asleep he was disturbed and awakad by a confused noise, at first seeming to him to be the report of guns fired, made by riotous persons in the street, at and near the same dwelling, and heard the glass of the lower story of the house breaking by throwing of stones against the same; that this deponent still lying in his bed, and not rising, heard some persons in the street say, "Here the damned rascals live who do all the mischief," or words to like effect. That the disturbance aforesaid, did not continue after the deponent awakad as aforesaid, above a minute, after which this deponent heard the rioters departing hastily, as the sound of their feet indicated, towards Mulberry street, and that the Hon. Juo. Smilie and Abraham Smith, together with James M'Calmont, James M'Leve, John Piper and Wm. Findley, esquires, representatives in the general assembly of this state, do also lodge with the said Alexander Boyd, and were all in bed, as this deponent hath good reason to believe, in the dwelling of the said Alexander aforesaid, at the time of the outrage and riot so as aforesaid committed, and further saith not.

On the same day Alex. Boyd, esq., who, being solemnly sworn with uplifted hand, doth depose, testify and say, that on the night of Tuesday last, being the sixth of this present month of November, this deponent, together with the Hon. John Smilie, John Beard and Abraham Smith, members of the supreme executive council, and James M'Calmont, James M'Leve, John Piper and William Findley, Esquires, representatives in the general assembly of this state of Pennsylvania, who lodge with this deponent, were gone to bed in his dwelling in Sixth street aforesaid;



that this deponent was fallen asleep, when about twelve o'clock, at midnight, a great noise in the adjoining street awakened the deponent, who thereupon immediately jumped out of his bed, and raising a sash of the window towards the street of the third floor of the house, he saw a considerable number of men in the street, of whom twelve or fifteen were nigh the door of the deponent's dwelling, and that divers of the persons, so as aforesaid assembled, did then and there speak reproachfully of the gentlemen who were lodged with this deponent, and did say that here is the house where the damned rascals lodge who do all the devilment, or words to the like effect; adding that they ought to be all hanged. That hearing the window rise and seeing this deponent at the window, as this deponent believes, this deponent heard one of the same persons say, there is one of the damned rascals putting his head out of the window. That a man who lives nigh to this deponent, and this moment coming out of this dwelling, and approaching the mob aforesaid, the persons who composed the same, ran northerly towards Mulberry street, and the deponent saw them no more. That this deponent was awakened as aforesaid, by the noise aforesaid, and by the throwing of large stone against the front door of his dwelling, some of which stones drove in the sash over the same door, and fell in his entry, and one of them was at least ten pounds in weight. And that this deponent was not able to distinguish any of the aforesaid rioters, so as to know their names or who they or any of them were. And further this deponent saith not."

In the assembly, Mr. Kennedy, if he was seconded, would present a resolution on this subject, which he had in his possession; he was seconded by Mr. M'Calmont, and the motion was read as follows :

"Whereas, It appears to this house, by the complaint of divers of the members, supported by the affidavits of the Hon. John Beard, esq., and Major Alexander Boyd, that on the night of Tuesday, the 6th day of November, inst., about midnight, a number of persons unknown, committed a violent riot and most outrageous assault upon the dwelling house of the said Alexander Boyd, in which three of the members of the honorable supreme executive council and four of the members of this



house lodged, and were there abed and asleep (until awakened by said rioters,) at the same time throwing out the most indecent and violent threats and abuse towards the said members, to the great contempt of this government and especially of the said supreme executive council and this house; therefore,

*Resolved*, That the said affidavit be transmitted to his excellency the president in council, and that it be recommended to his excellency and the honorable members of the said supreme executive council to offer a reward, by proclamation, for discovering the perpetrators of the said outrage and contempt, so that they may be brought to punishment, or for the discovery of any one of them, and that this house will provide for the payment of said awards; and that it be also recommended to the supreme executive council to direct the attorney general to prosecute the said rioters, and every one of them, when discovered."

This motion passed in an amended and stronger form with the pledge that the assembly would pay all expenses incurred—whereupon the supreme executive council issued a proclamation "to bring to exemplary punishment all persons who were concerned in the riot of the 6th instant, that they may be dealt with according to law."

I do not gather, however that these rioters were ever detected, or if they were, punished. Two of them were officers of the assembly itself.

In October, 1787, before the election for delegates to the convention, M'Calmont and 16 others of the assembly, addressed the people justifying their action, saying:

"We confess when the legislature appointed delegates to attend the convention our ideas extended no further than a revision of the present confederacy, nor were our delegates, by the act of assembly appointing them authorized to do more, as will appear by referring to the act appointing them" which is quoted at length. It bears out the assertions of the protestants.

Olymer and six others with him replied, giving this account of the choice of delegates:

"The original intention of the assembly was to send seven delegates, through afterwards that number was, by the supplementary law, increased to eight. To supply



the seven places, twelve stood in nomination. They, with the votes for each, were as follows :

Jared Ingersoll.....	61	Charles Peltit.....	25
Robert Morris .....	62	Thomas McKean.....	26
George Clymer.....	63	John Bayard.....	25
Thomas Mifflin.....	63	Benjamin Franklin ...	10
Thomas Fitzsimons....	37	William Findley .....	2
Gouverneur Morris....	35	James Wilson.....	25

All these gentlemen, except Findley, of Westmoreland, resided in the city of Philadelphia. The country members were entirely ignored in the election of delegates. Findley and Whitehill declined to be considered as aspirants for the place. General Mifflin was speaker, Clymer and Fitzsimons members of the assembly. "The supplement" spoken of, came near hoisting its engineers in the next assembly, and did so in two or three years afterwards.

Upon reference to the record, there must have been much "electioneering" previous to the meeting of the state convention, as on the question of ratification, the counties divided as follows :

	For the Constitution.	Against.
1. Philadelphia city.....	5	
2. Philadelphia county....	5	
3. Bucks.....	4	
4. Chester.....	6	
5. Lancaster.....	5	1
6. York .....	6	
7. Cumberland.....		4
8. Berks.....		5
9. Northamp'on ....	4	
10. Bedford.....		
11. Northumberland .....	2	
12. Westmoreland.....		3
13. Washington .....	2	2
14. Fayette.....		2
15. Franklin .....	1	1
16. Montgomery,.....	4	
17. Dauphin .....		3
18. Huntingdon.....	1	
	<hr/> 45	<hr/> 23

Elliott, afterwards of the "conference," member of the convention from Huntingdon, signed the ratification "after consideration." So with one of the delegates from Franklin, to the great provocation of his colleague and constituents. It will be observed that six counties, one third of the whole number represented refused to sign the ratification. It may be remarked here that at the next session of the assembly, the "anti-constitutionalists" elected just half the house, excluding the speaker, who did not vote under the rule, except when a tie occurred.

"The address and reasons of dissent of the minority of the convention of the state of Pennsylvania," is too long to quote; but it calls attention to the secrecy of the na-





tional convention by the remark that "the journals of the conclave are all concealed;" reviews its proceedings and proceeds to state how the resolution for calling a state convention passed the assembly, substantially as I have stated it.

It further protests that the constitution, "consistent with its idea of consolidation, contains no reservation of the rights and privileges of the state governments;" and the authority "vested in congress is unlimited in its nature, nay is comprehensive and boundless." This protest is signed by those members of the convention who voted in the minority, with the exceptions noted:

John Whitehill, Lancaster.  
 John Harris, Cumberland.  
 John Reynolds, Cumberland.  
 Robert Whitehill, Cumberland.  
 Jonathan Hoge, Cumberland.  
 Nicholas Lutz, Berks.  
 John Ludwig, Berks.  
 Abraham Lincoln, Berks.  
 John Bishop, Berks.  
 Joseph Hiester, Berks.  
 James Martin, Bedford.  
 Joseph Powell, Bedford.  
 William Findley, Westmoreland.  
 John Baird, Westmoreland.  
 William Todd, Westmoreland.  
 James Marshall, Washington.\*  
 James Edgar, Washington.  
 Nathaniel Breeding, Fayette.  
 John Smilie, Fayette.  
 Richard Bard (or Baird), Franklin.\*  
 William Brown, Dauphin.  
 Aaron Orth, Dauphin.  
 John A. Hanna, Dauphin.

\*Did not sign the protest. Had left for home before it was prepared.

In search for material necessary in the preparation of this paper, I have not been able to discover any copy of the journal of this state convention, either in print or manuscript. It may exist in some public or private collection, but it is certainly not where it should be—in the office of the secretary of the commonwealth.

Speeches of prodigious length were made in favor of the constitution, by Gov. M'Kean and Judge Wilson. These have been preserved, corrected by themselves, in a work projected to cover the proceedings of the convention, but only one volume of which was issued. Speeches of equal length were delivered by Robert Whitehill. William Findley and



John Smilie against its adoption, quite able as those of its advocates. The newspapers of the day contain excellent abstracts of these arguments, yet are blank on the personal incidents from which proceeded "the heat" shown on both sides. All the work was done in Philadelphia; the country had not shown its power, but like a sleeping lion aroused itself at the first election for members of congress, and the anti-constitutionals elected two of its nominees, greatly to the astonishment of the old counties and their leaders. About 15,000 votes were cast, as will be seen further on.

The constitutional question was earnestly debated in all circles. We have had no greater agitation on any public question since that time.

"Elliott's Debates," an account of the deliberations in the conventions of the several states upon the question of the adoption of the constitution, so often quoted as authority, has a most unsatisfactory report of the proceedings of that of Pennsylvania; merely the names of the delegates, the officers, the order of procedure, and the speech of Judge Wilson in favor of its adoption. Throughout his remarks are frequent allusions to objections of Smilie, of Fayette, Findley, of Westmoreland, and Whitehill, of Cumberland. Very unfairly none of their speeches are given. Elliott's proceedings end abruptly with the close of Wilson's ponderous opinion.

The proceedings of the Harrisburg conference are printed at length. They seem to have been furnished from an original among the papers of Blair M'Clanahan. The names agree with my list, except "Baird" of Franklin. It is remarkable, that nine who had been members of the state convention attended the Harrisburg conference—Bishop of Berks, "Baird" of Franklin, Marshall of Washington, Elliott of Huntingdon, Hoge and Whitehill of Cumberland, Orth and Hanna of Dauphin and Smilie of Fayette. I indulge the hope that some of the speeches against the adoption of the constitution may yet be recovered.

In concluding this resume of the course of public events previous to the meeting of the conference, it may be stated that the table showing the vote in the convention upon the ratification of the constitution is made up from the official certificate, which



does not contain the names of the protestants; other notices are drawn from various sources, principally pamphlets and newspapers of this period, and from MMS. that have been consulted.

It is time to take up the design of this paper—a history of the conference. No editorial comments touching it are found in the newspapers of the day, or notices of it in any of the histories of the state, from Scott to Egle. The only allusion that I have heard of is by Westcott, in his history of Philadelphia, that marvel of industry and intelligent research. Even there it comes out only incidentally in discussing the activity in public affairs of the gentleman who presided at the “Harrisburg Conference.”

I hope it will be found that a story so rapidly drifting to oblivion, has been preserved from that fate, however imperfectly the subject is presented.

Harrisburg has for many years been the favorite place for holding conventions in Pennsylvania. Very few persons, however, are aware that long before it became so prominent in that respect—more than twenty years before fixing the present seat of state government at it—a conference of decided significance was held here. In that day, when it occupied two or three days to travel west from Philadelphia, and twice as long from Fayette, in the western wilds, it demanded much personal sacrifice to hold a convention on any subject, yet men equal to the emergency were found to do it, as will be shown readers of this paper.

It was in 1788 a hamlet of less than 500 inhabitants, 102 taxables. It must have presented a very different aspect from the present. It had a jail—no court house or post office—no northern road; two leading east and one west; its prosperity was threatened by Chambers ferry, Middletown and Lebanon.

In the soft atmosphere of the early days of September, 1788, the banks of the Susquehanna, must have been

“Radiant in autumnal beauty,  
Clad in vestments gold and red,  
Stood the stately forests,  
Tossing high a haughty head.”

The moss covered banks of innumerable rivulets meandered across half formed streets and uninclosed lots; the swamps of the crooked Paxtang were in virgin slug-



gishness; yet the splendor of the forests on the surrounding heights, with the rich blue of the magnificent Kittatinny, impressed these visitors with the unrivalled excellence and beauty of the spot Harris had chosen for his new town. Among its advantages, not one was more prominent, than that it stood the gateway to a great west beyond the mountains as yet undeveloped, but rapidly attracting the attention of the enterprising and astute statesmen who then, probably for the first time, visited it

Unfortunately we have no record, at least none that I can hear of, of the impression it made upon the members of the conference. We are, therefore, at liberty to suppose that the question of a site, far from Philadelphia, for a permanent seat of government was discussed, which at length led to the choice of Harrisburg.

Papers or letters may yet be discovered which will shed information respecting this meeting, where it held its deliberations, with some account of its discussions? If held at a tavern, the most probable supposition—as we had no public buildings at Harrisburg for years afterward—which of them? I have ascertained that in the year of 1787, the following persons kept houses of public entertainment: Conrad Bombaugh, William Crabb, Samuel Grimes, [Graham,] Jesse Geibert, George Hoyer, Adam Hocker, Adam Natcher, Baltzer Natcher, James Stephenson, Jacob Zollinger, Samuel Weir and Jacob Weaver. Which of these sheltered these respectable visitors, or any of them?

Accommodation for many visitors was not a feature of the taverns, so early in the history of the town. I am of the opinion, therefore, that the meeting was held at the "Compass," a great part of which is yet in use as a public school-house at Front and Paxton streets—the "old ferry house." I find a description of the house in a journal of John Penn. This Penn was the son of Thomas, who was the second son of William and Hannah Callowhill Penn, born February 23, 1760, died 1834. His mother was Lady Juliana Penn, daughter of the earl of Pomfret. He published several volumes of poems, and to distinguish him from the John Penn who was governor of the province from 1763 to 1771 and again from 1773 to 1776, has been named John Penn the poet. In April 1788, he made a





journey from Philadelphia via Reading, Lebanon, Harrisburg to Carlisle. I am tempted to give an extract from a part of it now in my hands. It will be found in a forthcoming number, of an ably edited magazine published by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia.

Penn came from Lebanon on the 10th of April, 1788, over a road substantially the same as the present Hummelstown turnpike. He remarks :

"April 10. Rose by six o'clock, and after breakfast set out from Reading, in order to sleep at Harrisburg, the chief town of Dauphin county, and which was proposed to be the seat of government. Passed some mills a few miles from thence at Tulpehocken creek, which afterwards meets the road somewhat farther in a very picturesque spot. On the eastern side [at Womelsdorff] of this is a most elegant new Lutheran church. On the western is a Calvinist's, called here, by way of distinction, a Presbyterian church. After riding through a village I came to Lebanon, a handsome town containing some hundred inhabitants. This place is decorated by a spire, and the houses are well built; many of them stone or brick. It not being distant enough the horses were baited at Millerstown, [Annville], a small village half way, and twenty miles from Harrisburg, or Harris' ferry. About sunset I had a fine view of this town from a high part of the road, the river Susquehanna flowing between its woody and cultivated banks close to the town. Mr. Harris, the owner and founder of this town, informed me that three years ago there was but one house built, and seemed to possess that pride and pleasure in his success which Æneas envied.

*Felices illi, quorum jam mœnia surgunt !*

Tho' the courts are held here generally, Lebanon is infinitely larger. The situation of this place is one of the finest I ever saw. One good point of view is the tavern, almost close to the river. This was the Louse which stood alone so many years. It is called the Compass, and is one of the first public houses in Pennsylvania. The room I had is 22 feet square, and high in proportion.

"April 11. After breakfasting about eight with Mr. Harris, we walked together



to the ferry. The water being high, we ferried across with difficulty, and almost dropped down to a very rapid part below the landing place; but at length escaped a disagreeable situation. About two miles from the river passed the house of Whitehill the assemblymen, [Whitehill station], and arrived about three at Carlisle, seventeen miles off."

[Mr. Penn remained at Carlisle until the 13th, when he commenced his return to Philadelphia. He thus proceeds]:

"April 13 Rose early in order to see a cave near Conedogwinit creek. Returned and pursued my route to a place called Lisburn, tho' it proved somewhat out of my way. Just at this spot the country is romantic. The name of the creek running thro' it, *Yellow breeches creek*, may, indeed, be unworthy of it. From hence the road lay thro' woods till the Susquehanna, and Harrisburg at a distance, denoted that a ferry was at hand. I crossed the river about three and a half o'clock, surrounded by enchanting prospects. The ride to Middletown is along the eastern bank, and exhibits a striking sample of the *great*, in the opposite one, rising to a vast height, and wooded close to the water's edge for many miles. From this vast forest, and the expansive bed of the river navigable to its source for craft carrying two tons burdens, the ideas of grandeur and immensity rush forcibly upon the mind, mixed with the desert wilderness of an unhabited scene. The first particular object on this road is Simpson's house, the owner of the ferry where I crossed. It is on a rock across the river. At Middletown I put up at one More's [or Moor,] who was a teacher formerly at Philadelphia of Latin and Greek. He talked very sensibly, chiefly on subjects which discovered him to be a warm tory. and friend of passive obedience. Unlike many tories he is an enemy of the new constitution. Here the Great Swatara joins the Susquehanna, and a very fine mill is kept at their confluence by Mr. Frey, a Dutchman.

"Simpson's" was the fine stone house on the west bank of the Susquehanna, erected by Gen. Simpson, a Dauphin county man and soldier of the revolution. It is now owned by Jacob S. Haldeman.



Cutler, a New England traveler, passed through and lodged at Harrisburg in 1787. He writes a more roseate description of us than Penn. "One hundred brick houses," is Cutler's estimate, which was not true; as there was but 158 of that material, by actual count, thirty five years after his visit. He was struck by the beauty and eligibility of the location. In that he agrees with Penn, and all early tourists to the then unexplored "western country."

From Penn's notes local readers will agree with me that the old dining room at the "Compass" could comfortably accommodate a meeting of 33 very orderly gentlemen for two or three hours.

One is at liberty to surmise that these gentlemen were personally, or by correspondence, acquainted with one another; that they enjoyed the pleasure of fellowship symposia, as much as any who have followed them on the stage of public life. We must also infer that their meeting was conducted with stern gravity; its proceedings, according to rigorous rules, whilst so engaged. Beside being brought face to face with one another, it brought them antagonistic to nearly all who had been leaders of public opinion for fifteen years; of many who had marched under the same banner, and undergone the same privations during the revolution. They were looked down upon as "frontier men," presumptions enough to test the pulse of public opinion upon a most important question in defiance of the views of the majority of the assembly, and of the sentiments of the people of the eastern counties. Most of them were young. Gallatin and Hanna 27 and Bishop and Kean only 26. None of them had made much figure in civil life, except Bryan, Smilie, Hoge and Whitehill; nearly all of them had, however, served as officers during the revolution, and at the moment occupied local positions of responsibility. All were of the highest social position, thoroughly in earnest; in politics "anti federal;" in plain words thought the federal constitution "too monarchical." Upon this feature of that instrument a fierce war, resonant with wrath and riot, in our own and other states, had excited the public mind for nearly a year



previously to the gathering of this conference.

The following gentlemen composed the conference. I have three lists—two printed, one MSS.—have consulted twice as many; compared them carefully, and the one presented may be accepted as correct:

George Bryan, Philadelphia.  
 Charles Pettit, Philadelphia.  
 Blair M'Clanahan, Philadelphia.  
 Richard Backhouse, Bucks.  
 James Hanna, Bucks.  
 Joseph Gardner, Ches'er.  
 James Mercer, Lancaster.  
 Benjamin Blythe, Franklin.  
 Robert Whitehill, Cumberland.  
 John Jordan, Lancaster.  
 William Sterrett, Cumberland.  
 William Rodgers.  
 Adam Orth, Dauphin.  
 John Rogers, Dauphin.  
 Thomas Murray, Northumberland.  
 Robert M'Kee, Lancaster.  
 John Kean, Dauphin.  
 William Petrieken, Northumberland.  
 Jonathan Hoge, Cumberland.  
 John Bishop, Berks.  
 Daniel Montgomery, Northumberland.  
 John Lytle, Northumberland.  
 John D. Kay, Chester.  
 John Smilie, Fayette.  
 Albert Gauatin, Fayette.  
 Jas Marshall, Washington.  
 Benjamin Elliott, Huntingdon.  
 Richard Bard (Beard), Franklin.  
 James Crooks, Washington.  
 John A. Hanna, Dauphin.  
 Daniel Bradley, Dauphin.  
 Robert Smith, Chester.  
 James Anderson, Bedford.

The counties of York, Northumberland and Montgomery were not represented.

Elliott, of Huntingdon, had signed the ratification of the constitution, as a member of the state convention.

The first proposition was to make Bryan the presiding officer. It was deemed politic not to do so, as he was a judge of the supreme court. The choice fell upon BLAIR MCCLANAHAN, of Philadelphia. Accordingly he presided. JOHN A. HANNA, of Harrisburg, was chosen secretary.

As there is no connected record of the proceedings, it is impossible to state with certainty what then took place, but evidently Hanna read the following, preparatory to further proceedings. The locality from which the following circular emanated was "Stoney Ridge," about ten miles west of Harrisburg—now New Kingston—in Cumberland county, the site of a famous tavern and store, still standing, at present occupied as a farm residence.

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"HARRISBURG, Dauphin county, Pa., September 3, 1788 — Agreeably to a circular letter which originated in the county of Cumberland, inviting to a conference such of the citizens of the state who conceive that a revision of the federal system, lately proposed for the government of the United States is necessary; a number of gentlemen from the city of Philadelphia and the counties of Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Lancaster, Cumberland, Berks, Northumberland, Bedford, Fayette, Washington, Franklin, Dauphin and Huntingdon have assembled at this place for said purpose."

It is probable that at this point—Gallatin, as he did not speak very good English, through his distinguished colleague, Swilie, offered his resolutions—the endorsement upon which has drawn forth this narrative. They are much more decided in tone than those finally attached to the address of the conference, and are as follows:

1st. *Resolved*, That in order to prevent a dissolution of the Union, and to secure our liberties and those of our posterity, it is necessary that a revision of the Federal constitution be obtained in the most speedy manner.

2d. That the safest manner to obtain such a revision will be, in conformity to the request of the state of New York, to use our endeavors to have a convention called as soon as possible;

"*Resolved*, therefore, that the assembly of this state be petitioned to take the earliest opportunity to make an application for that purpose to the new congress.

"3d. That in order that the friends to amendments to the federal constitution who are inhabitants of this state may act in concert, it is necessary, and it is hereby recommended to the several counties in the state, to appoint committees, who may correspond one with another, and with such similar committees as may be formed in other states.

"4th. That the friends to amendment to the federal constitution in the several states, be invited to meet in a general conference, to be held at — on — and — members elected by this conference, who, or any of them, shall meet at said



place and time, in order to devise, in concert with such other delegates from the several states as may come under similar appointments, on such amendments to the federal constitution as to them may seem most necessary, and on the most likely way to carry them into effect."

The usual committee was then appointed. It is clear that diversity of sentiment existed, as previously to the adoption of the address which was issued on the subject, the following resolves were read. They are of a different temper from those drawn by Gallatin; much more likely to be effective before the people. The object of the founders of a party, *at the moment, in hopeless minority*, was to present a record upon which any aspiring politician could place himself. They were successful to such a degree that the destiny of the state and nation were in the party, thus called into being, for fifty years afterwards, almost without interruption. Whatever intermediate occurrences took place, deliberation announced the decision of the conference to be:

1st, *Resolved*, That it be recommended to the people of this state to acquiesce in the organization of the said government; but although we thus accord in its organization, we by no means lose sight of the grand object of obtaining very considerable amendment and alterations which we consider essential to preserve the peace and harmony of the Union, and those invaluable privileges for which so much blood and treasure have been recently expended.

"2nd. *Resolved*, That it is necessary to obtain a speedy revision of said constitution by a general convention.

"3d. *Resolved*, That, therefore, in order to effect this desirable end, a petition be presented to the legislature of the state requesting that honorable body to take the earliest opportunity to make application for that purpose to the new congress."

The address is of marked brevity compared with other papers of the time. A few words from it and the reasons for expressing opposition to the constitution is all that is necessary for the present.



After stating acquiescence in the ratification by the states, Gallatin's draft of an address is used so far as it agreed with the opinion of the conference. Then the address proceeds to state that the "constitution in its present form contains some principles which may be perverted to the injury of the citizen and prove incompatible with order and government," expressing the opinion "that considerable amendments are essentially necessary;" further that they are "sensible that a large number of the citizens both in this and other states, who gave their assent to its being carried into execution previous to any amendments, were actuated more by fear of the dangers that might arise from any delays than by a conviction of its being perfect."

Concluding with the hope that "prudence and policy" will soon bring about the amendments, which those with whom they were in harmony in other states, "are pressing so earnestly."

This was the day of long papers. As an illustration, it may be stated that the reasons of the delegates who refused to sign the certificate of ratification would fill very many columns of a modern newspaper. On the other hand, this conference issued a brief, shrewd and elegantly drawn paper. It excited marked attention and was extensively republished.

Subsequently to the action of the "conference," its opponents issued a circular directing public attention to the fact, that an election, by general ticket, for eight members of congress was to be held on the fourth Wednesday of November; calling upon "the friends of the new constitution to be on their guard, lest the names of persons opposed to the same, or of doubtful sentiments, should be circulated in the counties and in the city; especially let them beware of counterfeits, for such are abroad." The committees circulating this also inform the people that "the smuggling business which took place at Harriburg with the ostensible purpose of procuring amendments to the constitution, but in fact to form a ticket for representatives in congress" should be "*watched!*"



This is a palpable hit at the conference, showing that something beside amendments to the constitution was the moving object of it.

On the 3d of November the "Federalists," as they called themselves, met at Lancaster to form a ticket for members of congress. This meeting did not openly attack the opponents of the constitution. Indeed so confident were they of success that it was not deemed dignified, or in any way necessary to do so. But so unexpectedly strong was opposition developed, as the returns from "the back counties" reached Philadelphia, "that very great surprise was created at the course of public sentiment." And no wonder, for when all the returns came to hand, it appeared that the voters were divided into two nearly equal parts, "giving most of the advantages of political success to those who favored amendments to the constitution." The vote was as follows :

HARRISBURG TICKET.		LANCASTER TICKET.	
Robert Whitehill...	5,860	Frederick Augustus	
Wm. Montgomery..	6,334	Muhlenberg .....	8,697
Daniel Hiester..	7,405	George Clymer.....	8,087
Peter Muhlenberg..	7,415	John Allison.....	7,074
Wm. Findley.....	6,587	Stephen Chambers.	7,053
Charles Pettit.....	6,484	Thomas Scott.....	8,068
Blair M'Canahan..	6,227	Henry Wynkoop...	8,052
Gen. Wm. Irvine...	6,490	Thomas Hartley...	8,163
		Thos. Fitzsimmons.	8,085

About 15,000 votes were polled at this, the first state election in Pennsylvania. The population was less than 400,000.

Nearly every one of the men of this conference had previously made an excellent record for themselves and their posterity, as efficient soldiers of the revolutionary war or in civil capacities. Some of them were quite conspicuous in public life; it will, therefore, not be inappropriate to conclude with brief notices of such patriotic lives. I cannot say that these personal sketches are correct in all details, but can truly assert, that my best efforts have been exerted to make them so.

*Bryan* a lawyer, who came into public life in 1765, having received an equal number of votes for assembly in Philadelphia against a prominent quaker—Pemberton. The political race was run over again, and Bryan, a presbyterian opponent of the proprietary, was then chosen. He was





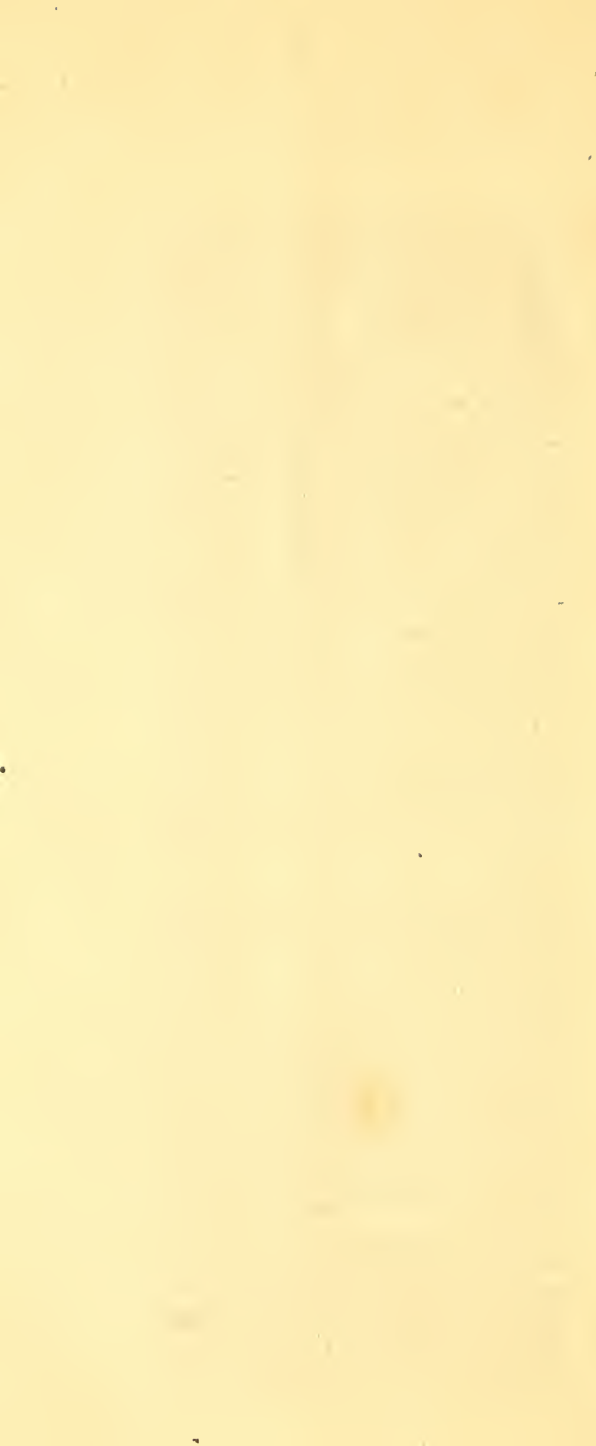
frequently in the assembly, until he was elected vice president of the supreme executive council, then again in the assembly; in 1780 appointed a judge of the supreme court and reappointed in 1787. One of his sons, a namesake, was auditor general of Pennsylvania from 1809 to 1821. This family therefore held father and son, public offices, under the proprietary, the state, and the commonwealth, for the long period of 56 years. Judge Veech states that Judge Bryan was the author of the constitution of 1776. This is quite probable, although it is asserted that Gov. M'Kean was its author, framing it in one night; a labor impossible to perform in so short a time.

*Pettit* entered the public service in 1776, as a quartermaster general. He served during the whole Revolution in that capacity, afterwards in congress—all his life very prominent in public affairs.

*Hoge* one of the original members of the supreme executive council, often in the assembly, and one of those men ready "in sunshine or in storm," to give his services to his country. The town of Hogestown in Cumberland county, laid out of his farm, perpetuates the locality of his residence, and the beautiful grave yard at Silvers Spring Presbyterian church shelters his remains.

*Orth* served as an officer in the early days of the revolution. Being an excellent accountant and penman, the authorities conferred upon him the office of lieutenant of Lancaster county in place of Galbraith, who "was dilatory," and not much of an accountant. The trouble was the collection of military fines, the sort of money in which they were to be paid, and the want of certified rolls. Orth had as his assistant, Philip Gloninger. After a labor from 1780 to 1783, the duty was satisfactorily forward—then what was not settled—"the peace closed." Orth was frequently in the assembly. His last public station was as state senator. He died at Lebanon.

*Bishop*, a prominent and popular Berks county politician. He was in the state convention, having as colleagues Governor Hiester and Abraham Lincoln, a very famous name in later days. He was sent to the assembly in 1780 and frequently afterwards up to 1805, when his public services



appear to have terminated. He must have been young when he entered public life, as I have been informed that he was not 50 years of age at his death, soon after his last service in the house of representatives.

*Backhouse*, at the time of this conference, was considered one of the wealthiest, as he was one of the most enterprising citizens of Bucks county; the owner of Durham iron works; a colonel of associators during the revolution. As "his views of government did not coincide with the majority of his fellow-citizens he was never elected to a political office." By some legal decision his title to the great property he had purchased was found defective. It was part of the Galloway forfeited estate. He was dispossessed, and died in the midst of litigation about it in 1792, as is said, "of a broken heart."

*Bard* a name spelled indifferently Bard or Baird. This gentleman was a justice of the peace for "the district of Peters" in Franklin county, soon after the erection of that county and a judge of the common pleas; served in the assembly; in the state convention, and was a major in the revolution.

*Bradley*, a member of the assembly from Dauphin in 1785, afterwards a justice; a resident of Hanover; a captain in Green's regiment, 1777; member of old Hanover Presbyterian congregation; dying in 1802, and is buried in the grave yard of that church on the eastern border of his native county. His family came to Paxtang at an early day.

*Whitehill*, born in Lancaster county; resided about three miles west of Harrisburg, at the present "Whitehill station"; an industrious farmer and faithful public servant; very frequently in the legislature from 1775 to 1805, when he was elected to congress, dying in 1813, while a member of the house. His term of public service extended over a period of nearly forty years. A man of fine proportion, robust health, an able, if not an eloquent speaker—all his life opposed to the "city gentlemen," as he called them. He lived long enough to become the leader of a triumphant party, and to repay them for the rebuffs they gave him as the "representative country member from Stoney Ridge." At the time of his death he was 75 years of age. He is



buried in the graveyard at Silvers Spring Presbyterian church, near his place of residence.

*Blyth* was perhaps the eldest of the gentlemen who composed the conference, having been an officer under Armstrong at Kittaning in 1756; again in the campaign of 1763, and as early as 1777 was a major. Some years before the formation of Franklin county, so far as ascertainable, he resided in the vicinity of Shippensburg, near the division line between Cumberland and Franklin. I have heard that his farm fell in Franklin county upon adjusting the boundaries of that county and Cumberland.

*Anderson* served as an officer; a captain in the revolution; foreman of the first grand jury of Bedford county, 1778; collector of excise and member of assembly. His father, James Anderson, was with Armstrong at the battle of Kittaning.

*Lytle*—This is surely a misprint, yet all the lists have it so; the name should be Little. He was at the surrender of Freeland's fort, and resided in the neighborhood of his colleague, Montgomery. It has not been possible to obtain any details of his life, except that he was a farmer and justice of the peace. A public man of the same name resided in Bedford county. Critics may hereafter decide which of them was at Harrisburg.

*Hanna John A.*, was a native of New Jersey, came to Harrisburg in 1785; married a daughter of John Harris, the founder; was a lawyer, served frequently from 1787 in both branches of the legislature; was a member of the ratification convention; and died while a member of congress in 1805. His first election was in 1797. He was a handsome, convivial gentleman, very popular and much esteemed. He died at forty-four years of age and is buried at Harrisburg.

*Mercer*, served as a colonel in the revolution; also as a member of assembly prior to 1790, and was in the commission as a justice of the pleas.

*Hanna James*, was probably a brother of John Andrew Hanna. He was prothonotary and a judge of Bucks, and quite a power in the local questions of his county, but as he was of the minority party, never held any state office. He served as a colonel in the whisky insurrection.



*McClanahan*, a successful and enterprising merchant with a particular relish for political turmoil. He was a patriot of the most extreme order as early as 1774, when he declared "he was ready for independence." He backed his opinion by subscribing, with Robert Morris, the great sum of £10 000 to start a bank. These two gentlemen took nearly half the stock of that venture. At the time he is introduced to us, he was fat, burly and gouty," but as full of spirit as a quarter of a century before. He was a great aid to the executive council and assembly during the whole revolution; a famous politician, yet not considered a wise one; an honest, intelligent man of business; a member of congress as an "anti-federalist." Galatin in a letter to his wife relates an anecdote of him which affords a glimpse of his natural impetuosity of speech, cultivated gentleman as he seems to have been:

"26 June 1797. I dined at the President. Blair McClanahan there, and told me P. that by — he had rather see a world annihilated than this country united with Great Britain, etc. It did not look at all like presidential conversation."

The seat of government was then at Philadelphia; Washington, President; Galatin and McClanahan both members of congress.

A recent communication signed "M," furnishes other particulars of the life of Mr. McClanahan:

"Blair McClanahan was associated with Robert Morris, with the latter staking his credit and placing his vessels at the service of the great financier, and so helping wonderfully the American cause. He made a fortune. McClanahan had a large family. But of them all something tragic might be told in the way of misfortune, sudden death, and so forth, and only one of the race survives, who, being an aged maiden lady, will, with her demise, leave the name extinct. Blair himself dropped dead on the piazza of a time honored mansion in Ardmore, the residence of the late Hon. Charles Kugler. The fate of Blair's son George is perhaps the saddest of any member of this family. Late one dark night as young McClanahan was returning home from Ardmore, his horse took fright and dashed on, his driver soon losing control of





him. Faster and faster rushed the frenzied animal, until he leaped against the bank, throwing his master out upon the projecting rock, killing him instantly.

*Smith* was an active field officer at the opening of the revolution in command at Billingsport; delegate to the convention, of 1774 and '76; sheriff of Chester 1777; then lieutenant of it, when in 1786 a great contest arose in the supreme executive council respecting him. A motion was made to displace him; on that a two weeks' debate; and more frequent calling of the yeas and nays than had before or after occurred in the council. He was displaced by a single vote—Dr. Franklin, Whitehill, M'Laue, of the "country party," supporting him.

*Gardner* a colonel in the early part of the Revolution; 1779 in the executive council; sheriff of Chester county; then a member of congress in the old confederation; in all these positions he appears to have acquitted himself with credit. As parties took form it happened that the choice he made was the minority one in his county, and his name is not afterward found occupying public office. He was highly esteemed in private life.

*Gallatin* made his first public appearance at the conference. A Swiss of fine education and decided ability, he soon acquired political position. He is one of our early public men that was chosen to the United States senate whose seat was vacated on the ground of want of citizenship. He was at once elected to the house, served there until appointed secretary of the treasury by Jefferson, sent by Madison ambassador to Paris, to London, to Gueat, and was offered cabinet positions by Monroe and Harrison. He resided at his death in the city of New York, where he died at 88 years of age.

*Rogers* John a major in the regiment raised by Timothy Green in Lancaster (Dauphin) in May, 1777; a resident "on Monoda" as early as 1754. He died December 6, 1792, and is buried at Hanover grave yard, Dauphin county. He was an active officer, serving 6 years, quitting the army with the rank of colonel.

*M Kee*, a colonel in the revolution; commanding at Middletown in 1777. I believe a native of Donegal, Lancaster county, died "on Chickes," and is buried in Done-



gal Presbyterian church yard.

*Petricken* was a noisy politician and of turbulent temper. He was popular, bold in the expression of his sentiments, and frequently chosen to occupy public positions, requiring capacity and integrity. I know that many of his descendants were persons of marked ability. He died in what is now Lyscoming county.

*Jordan* was a major during the closing events of the revolution; a judge and justice of the peace of his county. There were two or three prominent gentlemen of this name in public life at the same time: One in Lancaster county, another in Cumberland, and another in York; all of them in the commission of the peace, and all had been officers in the revolution. In the absence of the "credentials" it is difficult to write of the proper one, but it was not the York gentleman, as that county was not represented in this conference.

*Marshall*, one of the most active and trusted officials in the western part of the state; a colonel in the service; lieutenant of his county; in the assembly; sheriff; register of wills, and a "judge of the pleas." It is difficult to say what public trust he did not fill, as he seems to have held every position the government and his fellow-citizens could confer upon him, before and after the erection of Washington county, until his death.

*Kean*. In a manuscript list of the members of this conference, before me, also in a printed one, this is *John*. In a newspaper the *Carlisle Gazette* it is printed *James*, which I am satisfied is a misprint. It is therefore John Kean, of Dauphin county, who cut a great figure in public life from 1790 until 1812. He was a native of Pennsylvania; came to Harrisburg in 1785; county commissioner in 1788; a "judge of the pleas" 1792; a state senator in 1793; registrar general in 1795; dying at Harrisburg in 1813 at 56 years of age. He is buried in the Paxtaug Presbyterian grave yard.

*Crooks*. Of the locality of this gentleman I am not quite certain. In the county of Washington there is a large family connection of the same name, which is not the case in any other county in this state. He was no doubt a colleague of Marshall. He is called "Captain," and this is a presumption he had seen military service.



*Rodgers.* Whether this is a Rodgers of Philadelphia, Rogers of Bucks, Rogars of Bedford, is uncertain. All of them were prominent gentlemen and were named William.

*Murray* was a field officer in the revolution. After the peace removed to Northumberland county, where he died.

*Dicky.* One roll Dicky; on the rest Dickey. This name is common in Chester county and it is just possible he may have been a colleague of Colonel Gardiner.

*Montgomery* was an officer in Sullivan's expedition; a justice of the peace, and collector of ex cise, 1870, in Northumberland. He resided "south of Snubury."

*Sterrett* was an active politician; county lieutenant in 1785, but did not hold any other public position. His name, or that of his family, is perpetuated in "Sterrett-gap," in his native county of Cumberland.

*Elliott* was in one of the earliest conferences "respecting liberty," in 1774, from Cumberland; member from Bedford to the convention of 1776 to form a constitution; in the assembly; member from Huntingdon of the convention called to ratify the constitution of the United States; sheriff and lieutenant of that county. It does not appear that he ever changed his place of residence, yet his fortune was to have lived in three counties and to be entrusted with the very highest positions in every one of them. They literally grew up around him.

*Smilie*, one of the men whose distinguished public career and excellent private life remains unwritten. If it was within the design of this paper to do so, a subject worthy of an extended notice presents itself. Born in Antrim, Ireland, in 1737, he emigrated to Pennsylvania, fixing his residence in Lancaster county, which then covered a very large part of Pennsylvania. This was about 1760. His education was a solid one, but as he does not use quotations from the classics in his speeches which have been preserved, we may presume it was not classic. His English, however, is pure and his language polished. He is first heard of in public life as a delegate from Lancaster county to the provincial conference of June, 1776, as "Mr. John Smiley."

The minutes of the early conferences, for very good reasons perhaps, give the names



of those who formed them—the officers—very rarely the names of any one who made a motion, or the reasons for its adoption. It is therefore impossible to learn from them who were active or who were lukewarm. Smilie does not appear as a delegate to the convention that gave us the constitution of 1776. He soon after removed to Westmoreland (now Fayette county). He served as colonel for a year or two; then a judge of the pleas; soon elected to the assembly, where he had great influence; as a member of the supreme executive council; again in the assembly; member of the council of Censors, with William Findley of Westmoreland; del-gate from Fayette to the convention that gave us the constitution of 1790; in congress 1793 95; an elector in 1804, in favor of Jefferson; in the state senate; in congress from 1799 to 1813; a public life of nearly 40 years. Gallatin and Smilie resided in Fayette county, and were in congress at the same time, but the former represented a district in which he did not reside.

Col. Smilie died in the city of Washington on the last day of the year 1813 at the age of 76 years. During this long life he became one of the best known and prominent men of Pennsylvania. I hope some of the many competent gentlemen in the neighborhood of his place of residence, will undertake the task of preparing a biographical sketch of his career, that the memory of one of the most distinguished of our western statesmen may be preserved. Enough material exists to make an interesting, instructive and necessary memoir of John Smilie. It is not creditable that his useful life should be commemorated, only in foot notes!

HARRISBURG, September, 1879.

